

For Discussion on
21 May 2018

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

An Overview of the Civil Service: Establishment, Strength, Retirement, Resignation, Age Profile and Gender Profile

Purpose

This paper provides an update on the overall establishment, strength, wastage situation, age profile and gender profile of the civil service.

Establishment and Strength

(a) Overall

2. Over the years, the size of the civil service has largely followed changes in economic development, community expectations and demand for public services, as well as institutional and productivity reforms. The changes in establishment (i.e. the number of posts) and strength (i.e. the number of serving civil servants) of the civil service for the last 15 years since 2002-03 are shown at **Annex A**.

3. As shown at **Annex A**, the civil service establishment was around 174 100 in 2002-03 while the strength was around 169 100. There was a gradual down-sizing of the civil service afterwards, mainly because of the implementation of enhanced efficiency drives since 2000, the two general voluntary retirement (VR) schemes in 2000 and 2003, the targeted VR schemes for specific grades between 2000 and 2006, and the six years of open recruitment freeze which ended in March 2007 (namely from 1999-2000 to 2006-07, save for 2001-02 and 2002-03)¹. As at 31 March 2007, the civil service establishment and strength stood at around 159 400 and 153 800 respectively.

¹ Where there were strong operational needs, exceptional approval was given for a limited number of grades to conduct open recruitment during the period of open recruitment freeze.

4. In recent years, the civil service has grown steadily to meet the demand for new or improved public services. In the five-year period from 2012-13 to 2016-17, the civil service establishment had increased aggregately by around 9 800, representing an annual average increase of around 2 000. During the same period, about 10 600 appointments were made per annum to fill vacancies arising mainly from retirement, resignation and creation of new posts in relation to new initiatives and enhanced services. As at 31 March 2017, the civil service establishment and strength stood at around 175 156 and 167 671 respectively.

5. As reflected in the 2018-19 Draft Estimates, the civil service establishment is expected to increase from 181 751 as at 31 March 2018 (revised estimate) to 188 451 as at 31 March 2019 (draft estimate), representing an increase of about 3.7% over the 2017-18 Revised Estimates. The civil service strength as at 31 March 2017 represented about 2.3% of the population of Hong Kong (7.392 million in mid-2017) and about 4.2% of the total workforce (3.962 million in mid-2017).

(b) Directorate and Non-directorate

6. A breakdown of the civil service establishment and strength by directorate and non-directorate levels over the last 15 years is also provided at **Annex A**. In brief, over 99% of both the establishment and strength were at the non-directorate level. As at 31 March 2017, the establishment and strength at the non-directorate level were 173 686 and 166 305 respectively, and those at the directorate level were 1 470 and 1 366 respectively.

Wastage

7. In 2016-17, the wastage in the civil service was 7 793, accounting for 4.7% of the strength. Retirement was the primary reason for departure of civil servants, while the other reasons, including resignation, completion of agreement and death, accounted for only a small proportion of wastage.

(a) Retirement

8. The existing retirement age of civil servants is prescribed under the pension legislation and Civil Service Regulations. New recruits appointed to the civil service on or after 1 June 2015 are subject to the new retirement age of 65 in respect of the civilian grades and 60 in respect of

the disciplined services grades, regardless of their ranks. More information about the retirement age of civil servants is set out at **Annex B**.

9. The retirement² position of the civil service over the last 15 years is shown at **Annex C**. The number of retirees was around 6 000 in 2016-17, which represented about 3.6% of the strength. As regards directorate civil servants, the number of retirees stood at 6.2% of the directorate strength in 2002-03 and ranged between 6.1% and 9.8% from 2003-04 to 2012-13. The number then dropped to 7.8% in 2013-14 and increased gradually to 10.3% in 2016-17. Details are at **Annex D**.

10. Based on the existing normal retirement age of civil servants, it is projected that the natural wastage rate will continue to rise in the coming years. The number of retirees will increase from the annual average of 3.5% of the civil service strength for the five-year period ending 2016-17 to about 4% in the five-year period ending 2021-22. The number will then gradually decline to about 3.5% in the five-year period ending 2026-27, down to about 2.9% in the following five-year period ending 2031-32, and further to about 2.5% in the five-year period ending 2036-37.

(b) Resignation

11. Resignation accounted only for a small number of departures of civil servants. As shown at **Annex E**, the resignation rate ranged from 0.45% to 0.65% of the strength of the civil service over the last five years. In 2016-17, the resignation rate was 0.63%, remaining at a low level. Over half of the resignees left during their probation period, partly because they found a long-term career in the Government unsuitable for them.

12. According to the feedback received from the exit survey in 2016-17 as shown at **Annex F**, the major reasons for officers resigning from the civil service were: marriage or family reasons (24%), taking up jobs in the private sector (17%) and pursuing further studies (16%).

Age Profile

13. The age profile of the civil service over the last 15 years is illustrated at **Annex G**. While the age group of 40-49 remained the largest group of civil servants from 2002-03 to 2010-11, the age group of

² For the purpose of this paper, “retirement” covers retirement as set out in **Annex B** and re-employment after retirement without a break in service.

50 or above continued to increase and became as large as the age group of 40-49 in 2011-12. Since 2012-13, the age group of 50 or above accounted for the largest proportion of the civil service. Since 2006-07, around two-thirds of civil servants were in the age groups of 40-49 and 50 or above, while the remaining one-third was in the age groups of 20-29 and 30-39. In 2016-17, the age groups of 40-49 and 50 or above represented about 28% and 34% of the civil service strength respectively. The changes in age profile over the years were mainly attributed to the expansion of the civil service in the 1980s, the introduction of the New Pension Scheme in 1987 (under which the normal retirement age is 60 for civilian civil servants and 55/57 for those in disciplined services grades, instead of 55 under the Old Pension Scheme), and the open recruitment freeze around the turn of the century. The age profile of the civil service has continued to mirror that of the community and the working population as a whole, as shown at **Annex H**.

14. **Annex I** shows the age profile of directorate civil servants over the last 15 years. In terms of percentage, the directorate strength in the age group of 40-49 had been on a continuous decline in the last decade, while the age group of 50 or above had remained the largest group, representing about 79% of its strength in 2016-17.

15. Nevertheless, more young people have been recruited to the civil service with the gradual resumption of open recruitment as shown at **Annex J**. In the five-year period ending 2016-17, there were around 26 100 new recruits in the age group of 20-29 (or about 62% of the total intake) and around 10 000 new recruits in the age group of 30-39 (or about 24% of the total intake). As shown at **Annex G**, the number of civil servants in the age group of 20-29 increased from 9% of the civil service strength in 2009-10 to about 14% in 2016-17. This trend is expected to continue, which will bring about a more evenly distributed age profile of the civil service against the backdrop of the slight increase in the anticipated retirement rate in the coming years as well as the trend of steady growth of the civil service establishment.

16. As regards recruitment to the civil service, about 11 300 appointments were made in 2016-17. The appointment decline rate was at a low level of 13%. According to the feedback received from respondents to our survey, the main reasons for their turning down of civil service job offers were: taking up another civil service job (36%), remaining in their current job (33%) and marriage or family reasons (8%). Details are at **Annex K**.

Gender Profile

17. The female participation rate in the civil service over the last 15 years is illustrated at **Annex L**. The overall proportion of female civil servants increased from 33.7% in 2002-03 to 37.2% in 2016-17. The rising trend of female participation is observed in both directorate and non-directorate ranks during the period, the proportion for which was from 24.4% in 2002-03 to 35.3% in 2016-17 and from 33.7% in 2002-03 to 37.3% in 2016-17 respectively.

18. Furthermore, the rising trend of female participation rate is more prominent in respect of civilian grades. Specifically, the participation rate of female civilian civil servants³ rose from 42.9% in 2002-03 to 48.1% in 2016-17, under which the proportion increased from 26.3% in 2002-03 to 37.7% in 2016-17 for directorate officers, and from 43% in 2002-03 to 48.2% in 2016-17 for non-directorate officers. Details are at **Annex M**. The rise in the proportion of female civil servants was in line with the overall increasing trend in the female participation rate in the labour force of Hong Kong, which was from 43.9% in 2003 to 49.1% in 2016. The participation rate of female civilian officers was also on par with that in the labour force of Hong Kong. As at 31 March 2017 and 31 March 2018, of the 18 Permanent Secretary posts ranked at Point 8 of the Directorate Pay Scale (i.e. the top civil service positions), seven (or 38.9%) and nine (or 50%) were filled respectively by female officers.

Observations

19. The Government has put in place a package of measures to meet the manpower needs arising from creation of new posts and the anticipated higher natural wastage rate in the coming years.

20. In terms of recruitment, measures are in place to ensure that bureaux/departments (B/Ds) will continue to bring in new blood to fill government vacancies in a timely manner for meeting their operational needs and facilitating succession in the longer run.

21. We have also put in place a well-established mechanism to facilitate B/Ds' early planning for succession and timely action where necessary. Under the mechanism, the Secretary for the Civil Service

³ Calculated by excluding all civil servants who are serving in the disciplined services and remunerated by the Police Pay Scale (PPS) and General Disciplined Services Pay Scale (GDSPS).

regularly meets with Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Department to discuss the succession situation in individual departments and grades with the objective of ensuring early identification of any succession problems, advance planning and timely implementation of suitable measures. In tandem with the succession planning efforts, we have been providing training and development opportunities for civil servants at all levels to enrich their exposure, enable them to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for the discharge of their duties, and prepare them for higher responsibilities. Apart from 'in-house' training provided by individual B/Ds, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute of the Civil Service Bureau has put in place a structured training and development framework to assist B/Ds in grooming and developing civil servants with potential for advancement for succession planning purposes.

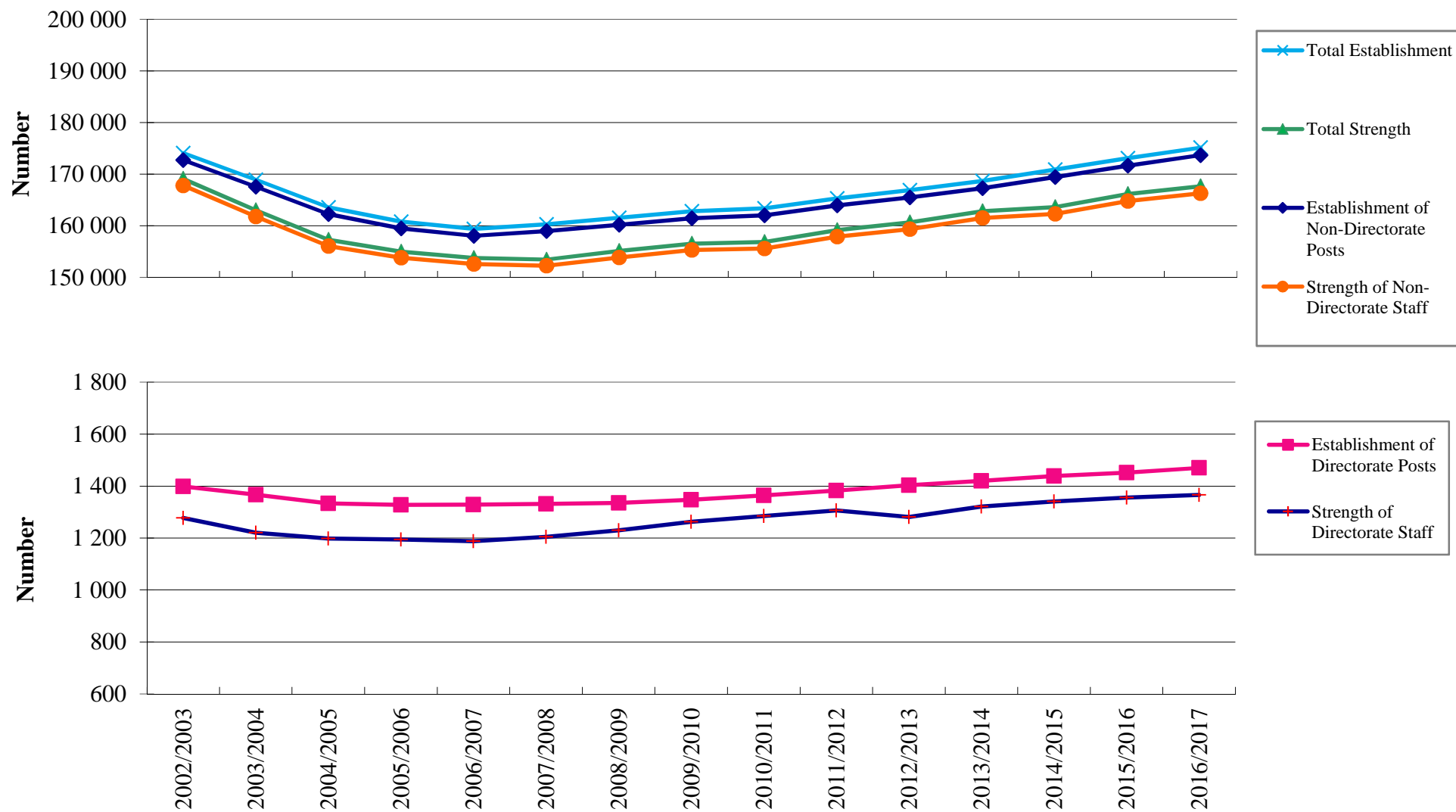
22. As regards human resource tools for extension of service of civil servants beyond retirement age, apart from the Post-retirement Service Contract Scheme that has been introduced, the adjusted mechanism for further employment of serving civil servants beyond retirement age was rolled out in June 2017. Under the mechanism, B/Ds are provided with flexibility to retain serving officers for up to five years in the light of operational needs, succession planning and recruitment situation of individual ranks. The foregoing will provide a resilient solution for addressing changing manpower requirements and circumstances of individual B/Ds.

Advice Sought

23. Members are invited to note this paper.

Civil Service Bureau
May 2018

Establishment and Strength of the Civil Service from 2002-2003 to 2016-2017



Retirement Ages in the Civil Service

(A) The normal retirement age is –

- (i) 55 for civil servants (both civilian and disciplined services grades) appointed before 1 July 1987 and remain on the Old Pension Scheme (OPS);

Civilian grades

- (ii) 60 for civil servants who have switched from OPS to the New Pension Scheme (NPS), those appointed on or after 1 July 1987 on NPS and those appointed on or after 1 June 2000 but before 1 June 2015 on the Civil Service Provident Fund (CSPF) Scheme; and 65 for civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2015 on the CSPF Scheme; and

Disciplined services grades

- (iii) 55 or 57 (depending on ranks)¹ for civil servants who have switched from OPS to NPS, those appointed on or after 1 July 1987 on NPS and those appointed on or after 1 June 2000 but before 1 June 2015 on the CSPF Scheme; and 60 for civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2015 on the CSPF Scheme, regardless of their ranks.

(B) Civil servants may apply to retire early after attaining the age of –

- (i) 45 for rank-and-file civil servants in disciplined services grades and are on OPS; and
- (ii) 50 for civilian civil servants and are on OPS, civil servants in

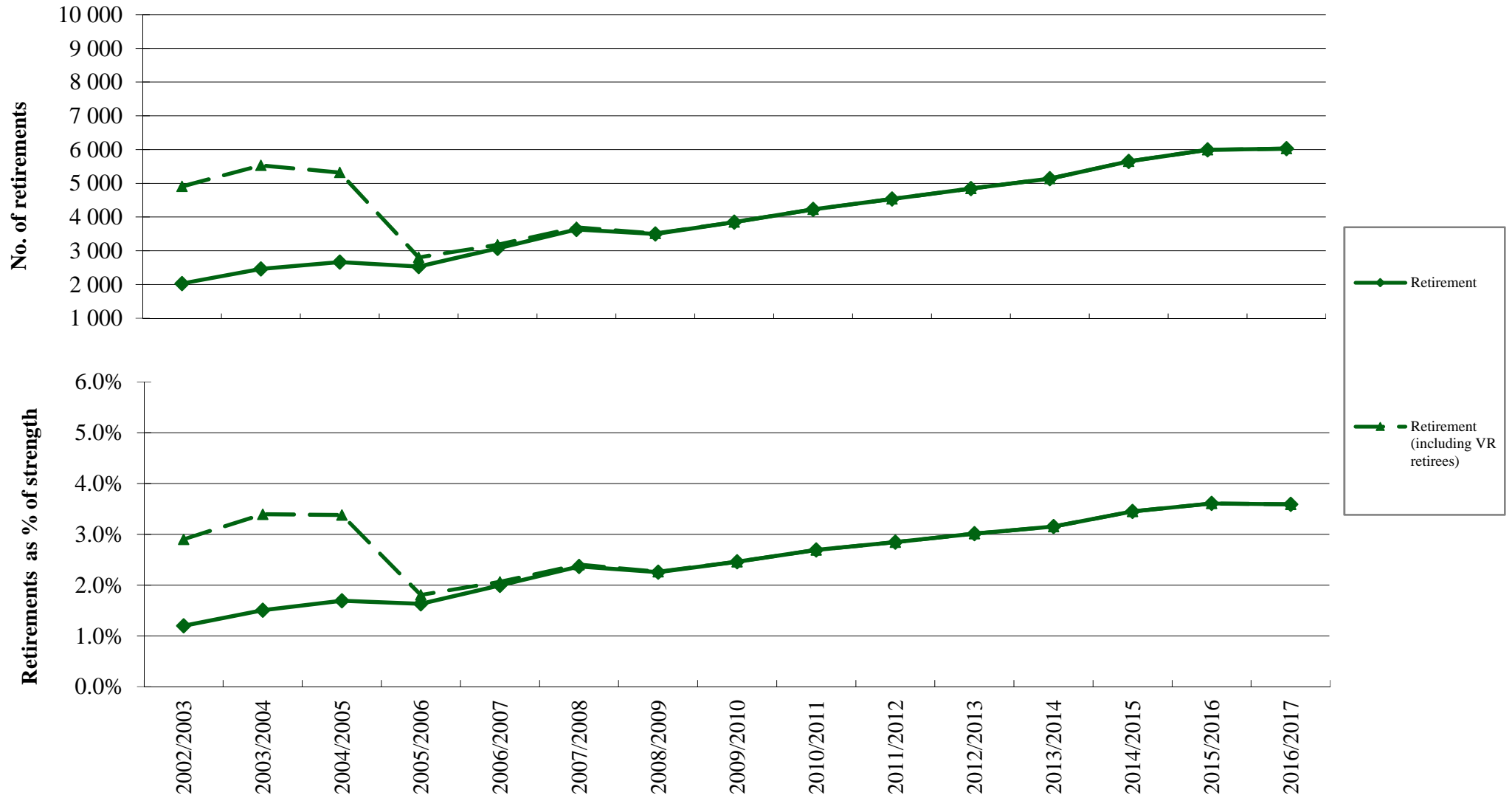
¹ The normal retirement age is 57 for civil servants in some directorate ranks in the disciplined services grades, while the normal retirement age is 55 for civil servants in all other ranks in the disciplined services grades.

officer ranks of disciplined services grades and are on OPS², and rank-and-file civil servants in disciplined services grades who have switched from OPS to NPS.

In addition, civilian civil servants who have switched from OPS to NPS may choose to retire at age 55. For civil servants in disciplined services grades who are on NPS (including those who have switched from OPS to NPS), they may choose to retire at the age of 50 or 55 (depending on ranks).

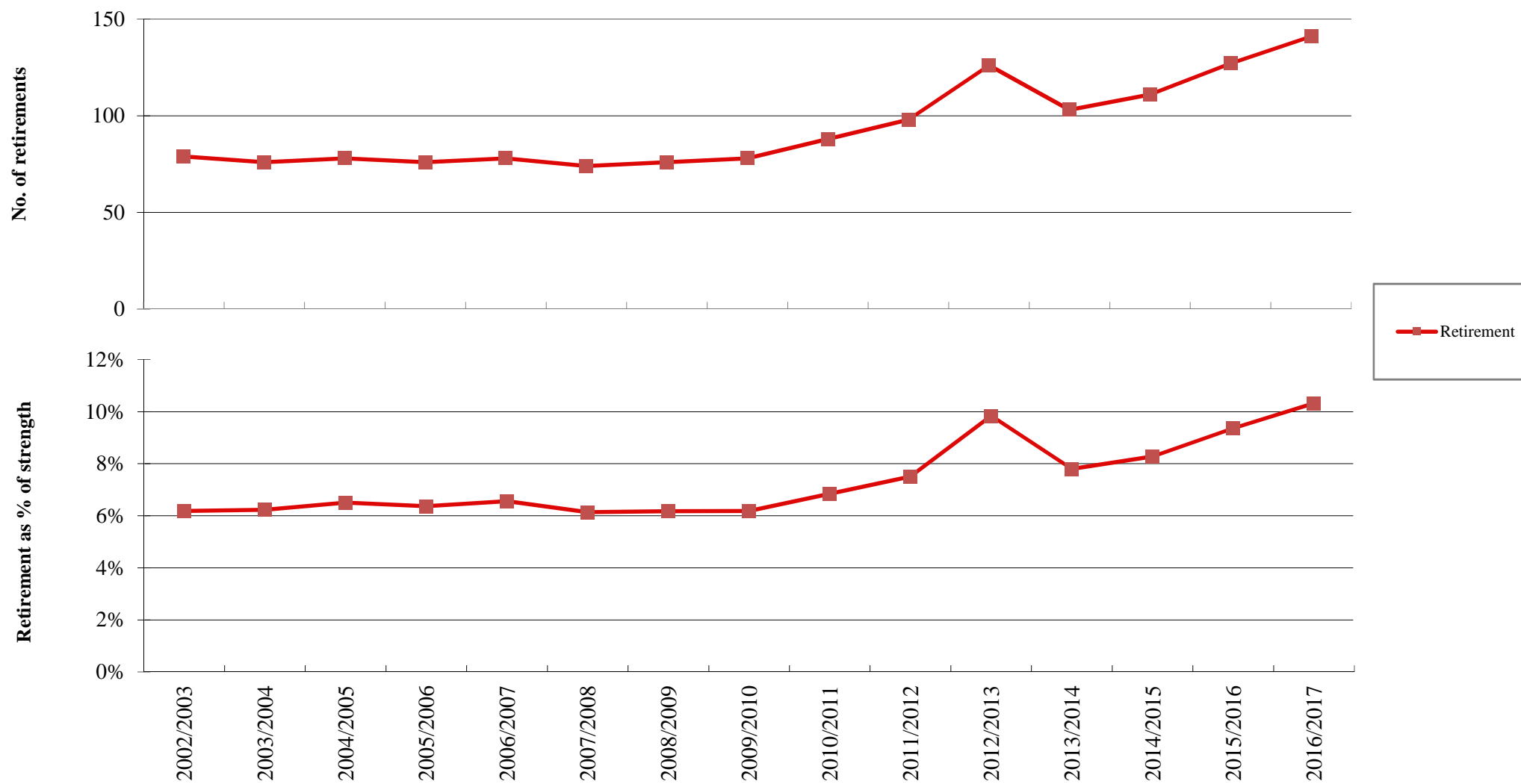
² Civilian civil servants and officer ranks of disciplined services grades on OPS may also apply for premature retirement on attaining the age of 45 on grounds of ill health, or on adequate compassionate or personal grounds.

Retirement Position of the Civil Service from 2002-2003 to 2016-2017



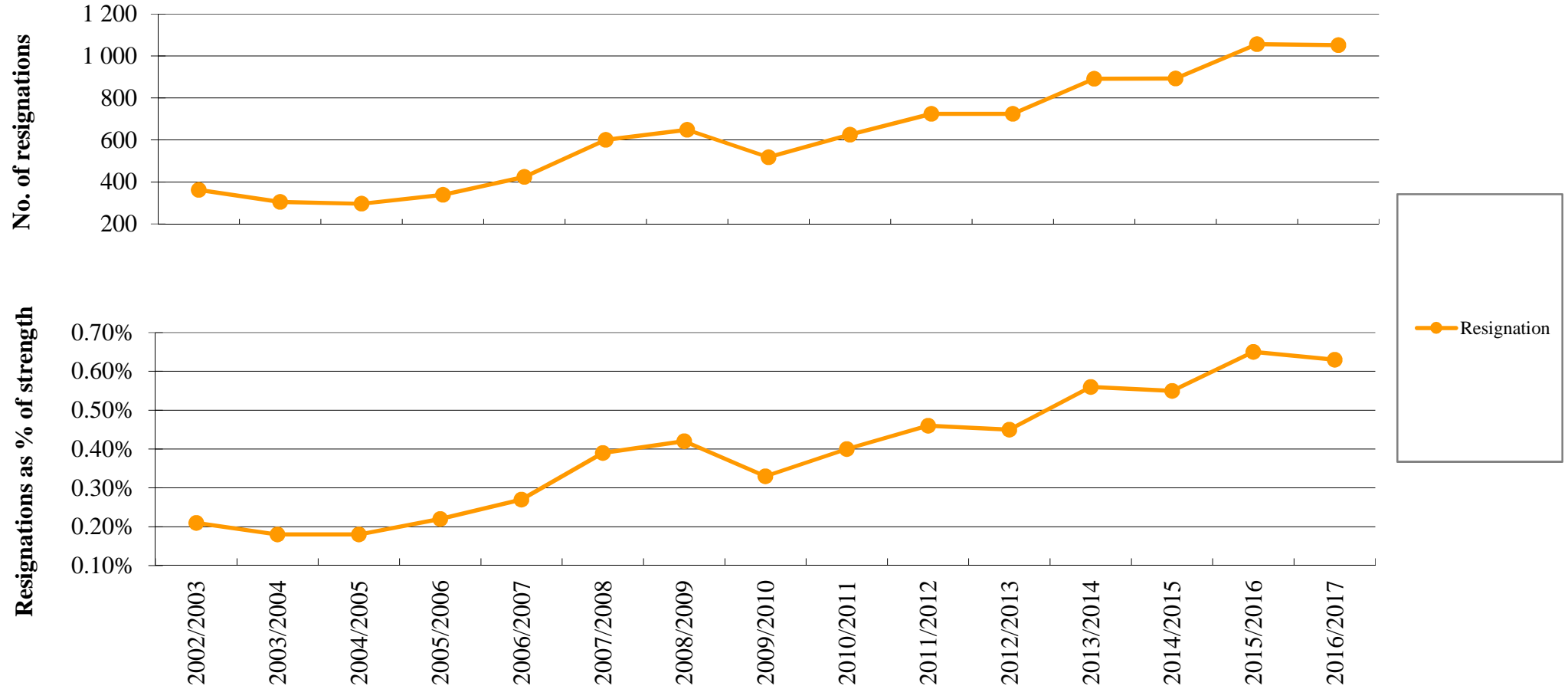
Note: “Retirement” in this chart covers retirement as set out in Annex B and re-employment after retirement without a break in service.

Retirement Position of Directorate Civil Servants from 2002-2003 to 2016-2017

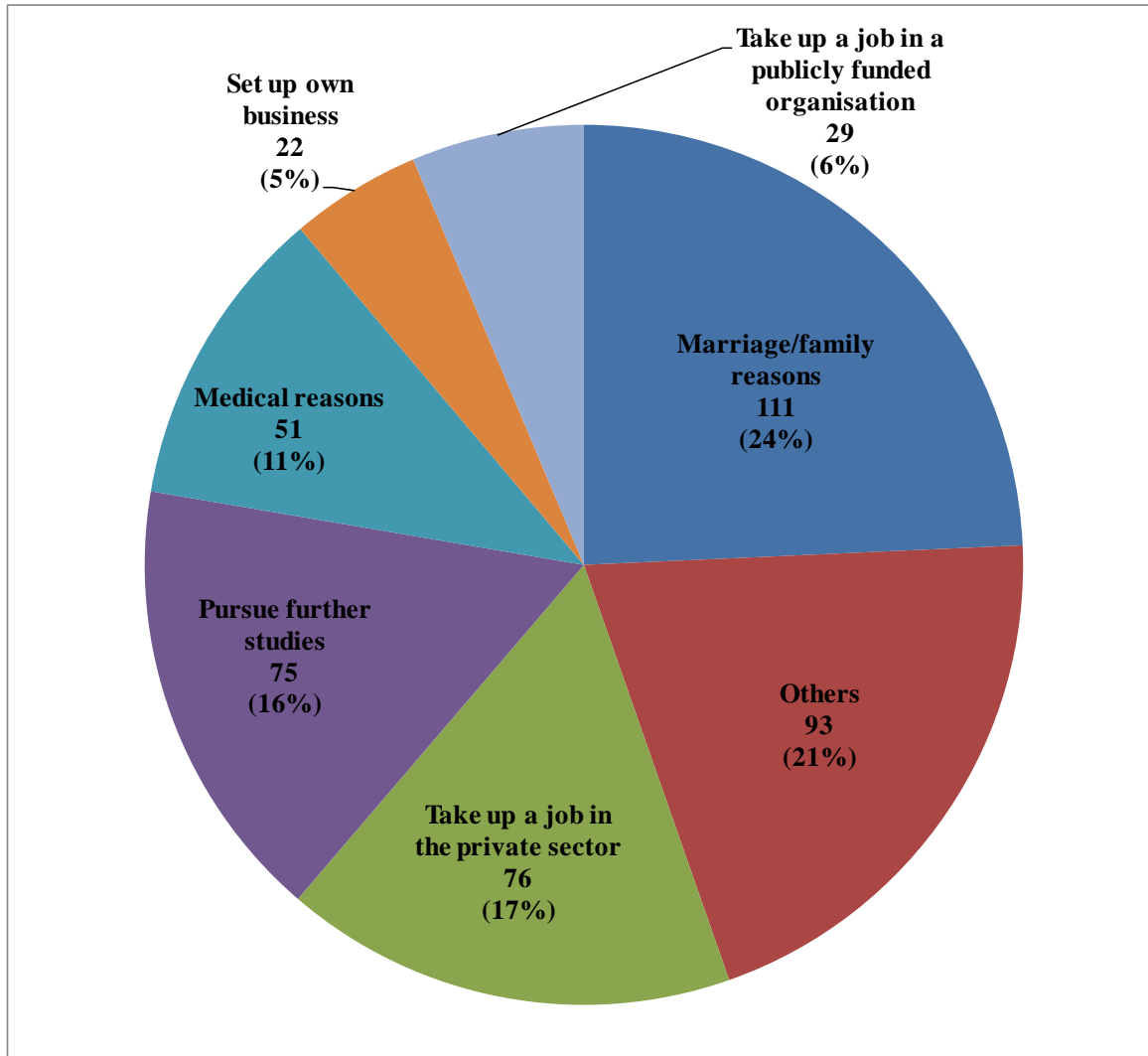


Note: "Retirement" in this chart covers retirement as set out in Annex B and re-employment after retirement without a break in service.

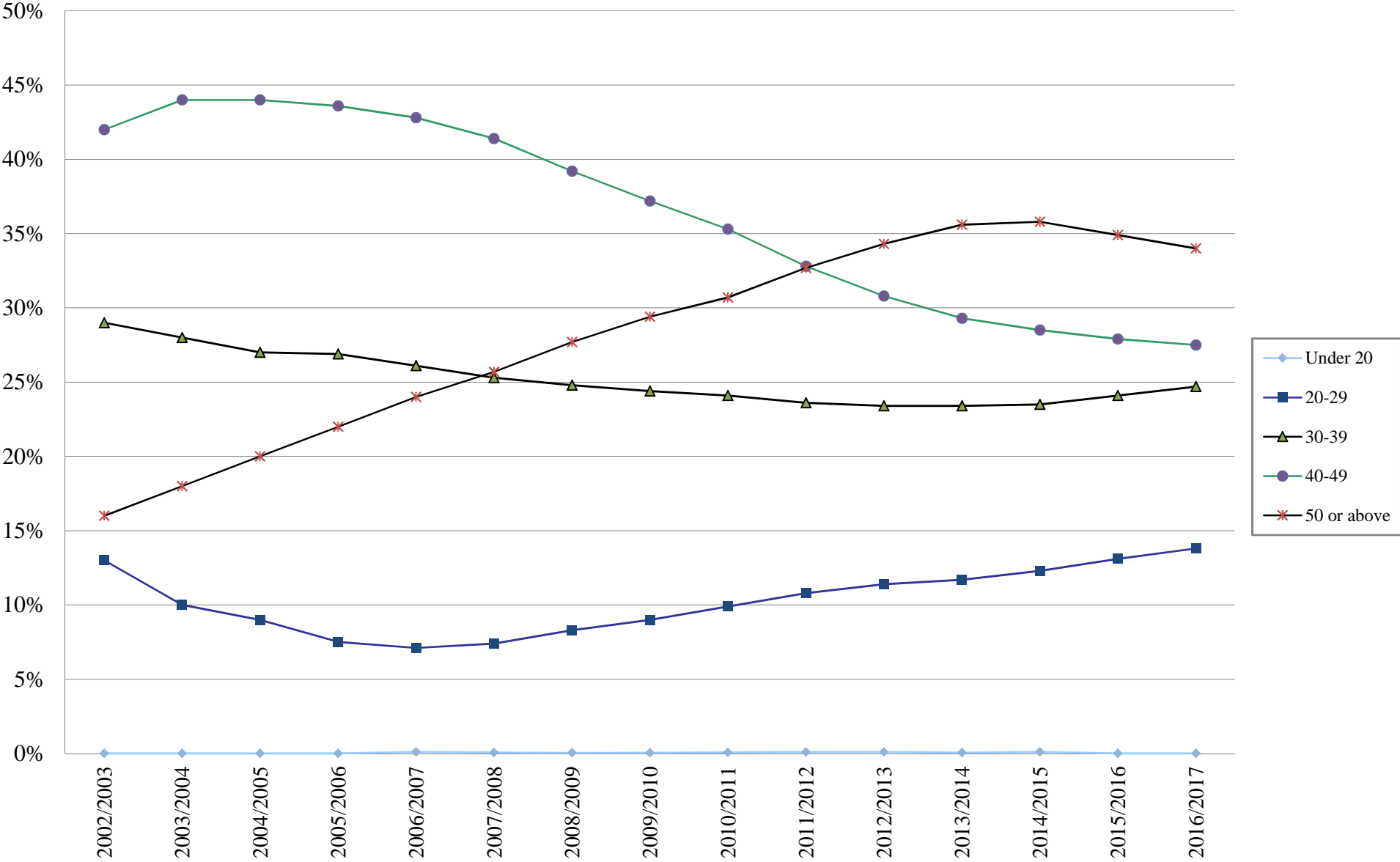
Resignation Position of the Civil Service from 2002-2003 to 2016-2017



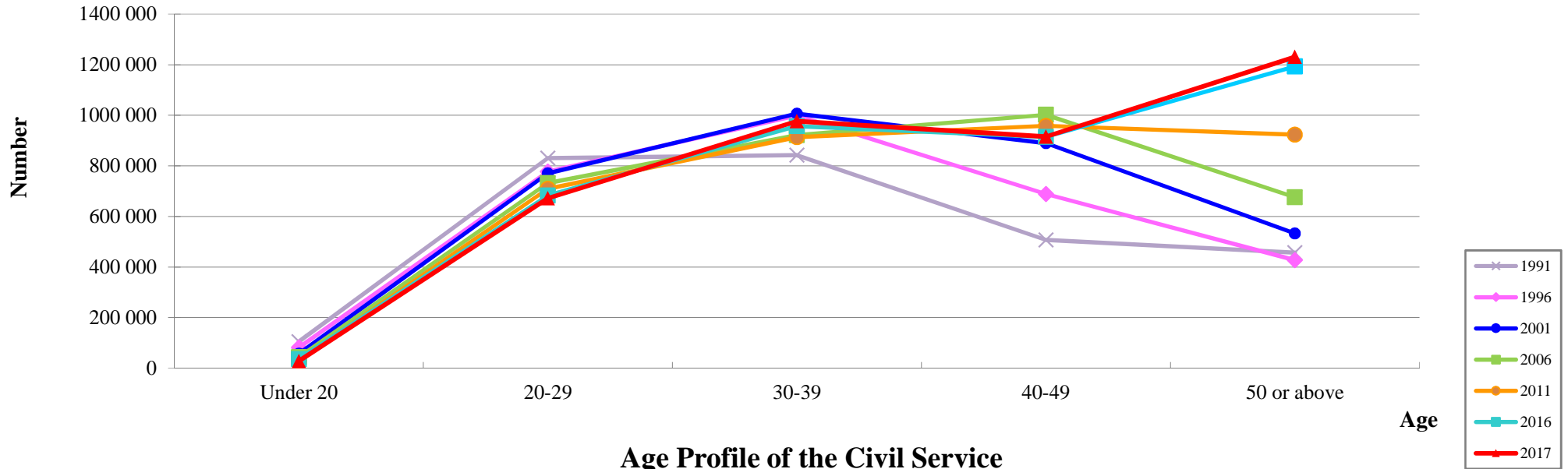
Major reasons for resignation for 2016-17
(Information from 457 respondents)



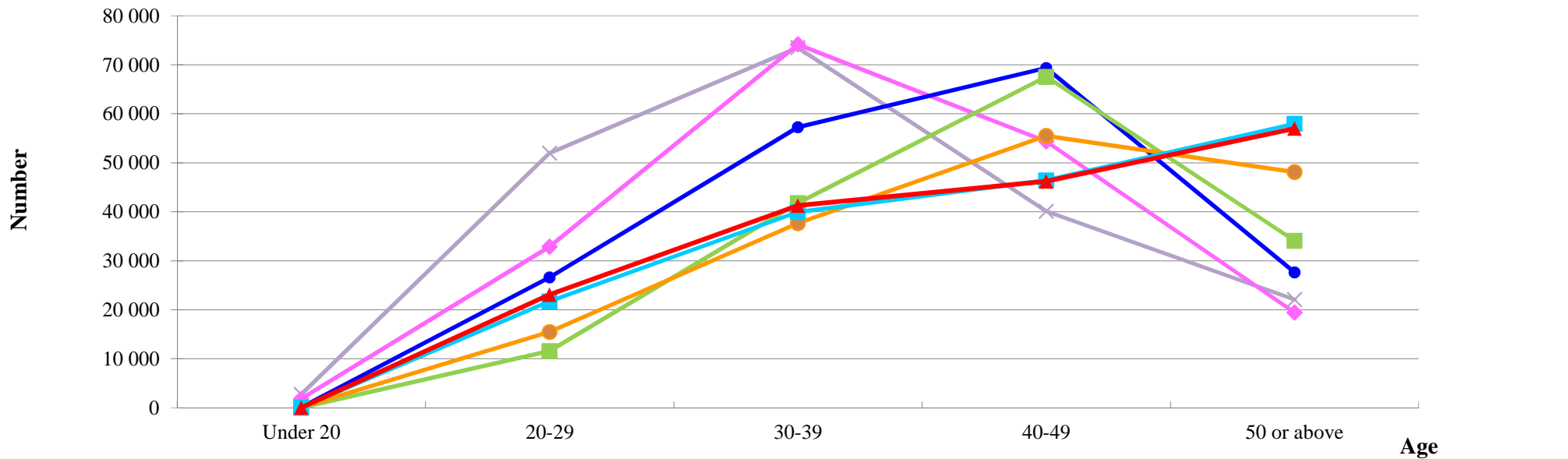
Civil Servants by Age Groups from 2002-2003 to 2016-2017



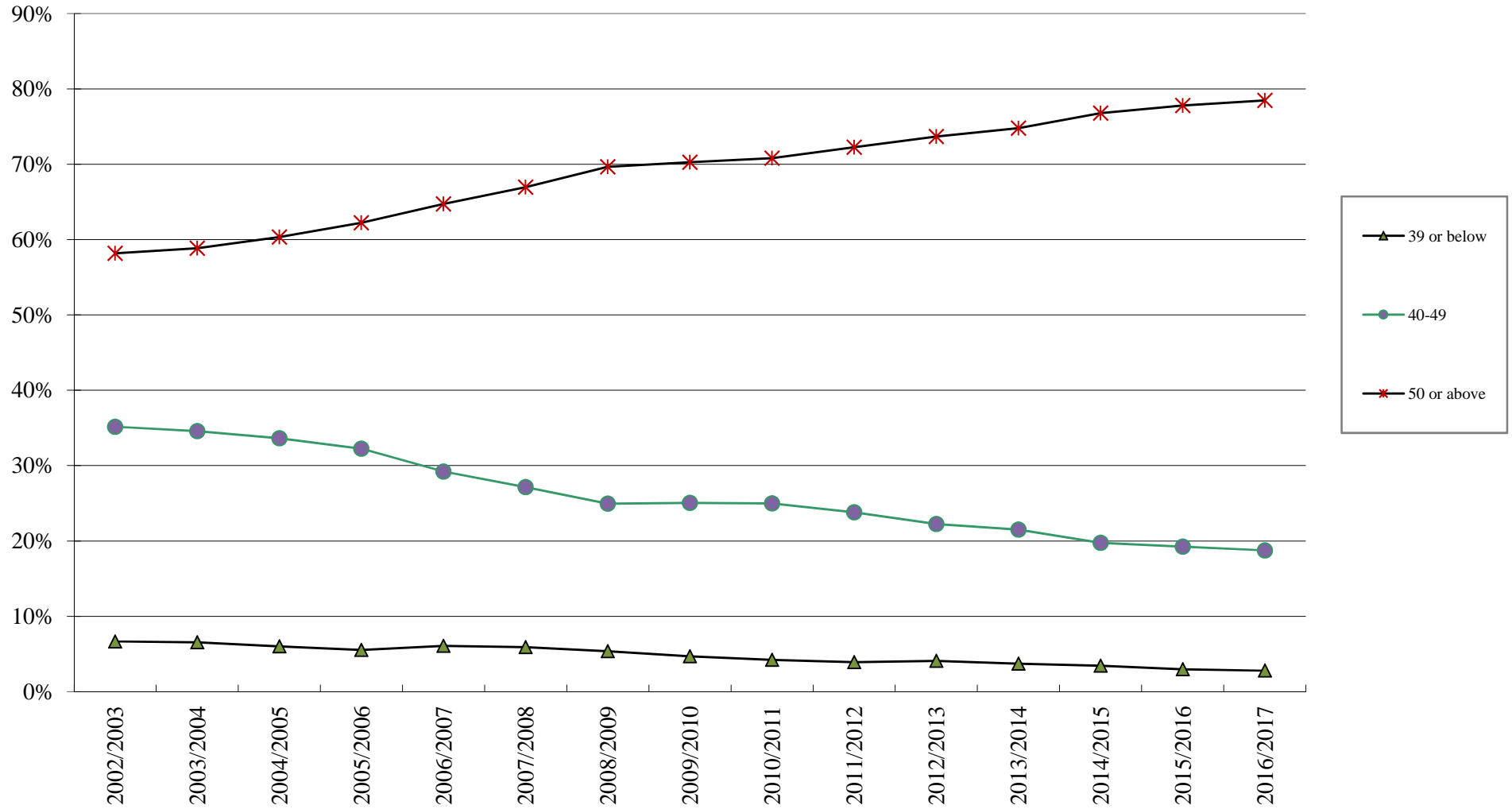
Age Profile of the Hong Kong Working Population



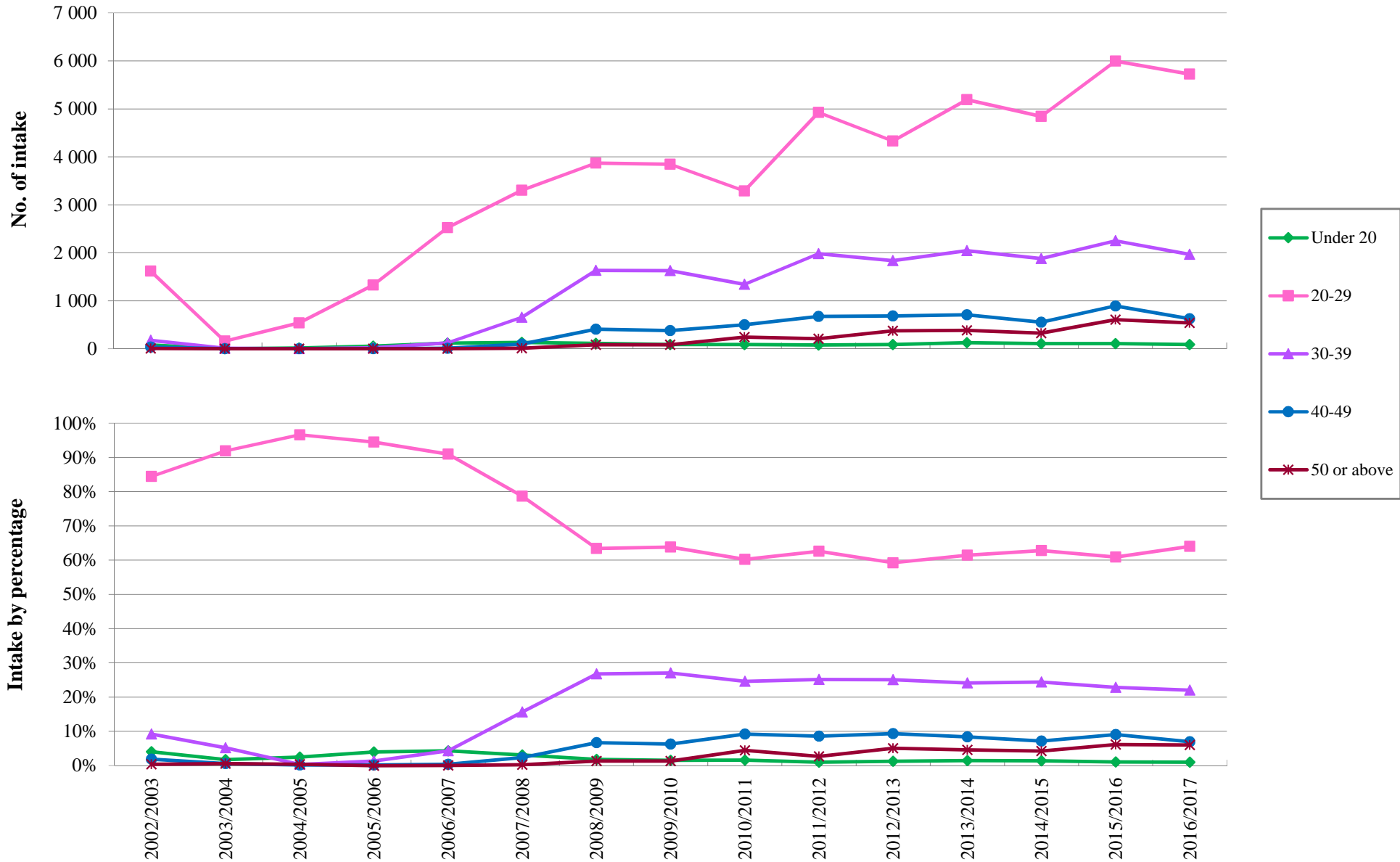
Age Profile of the Civil Service



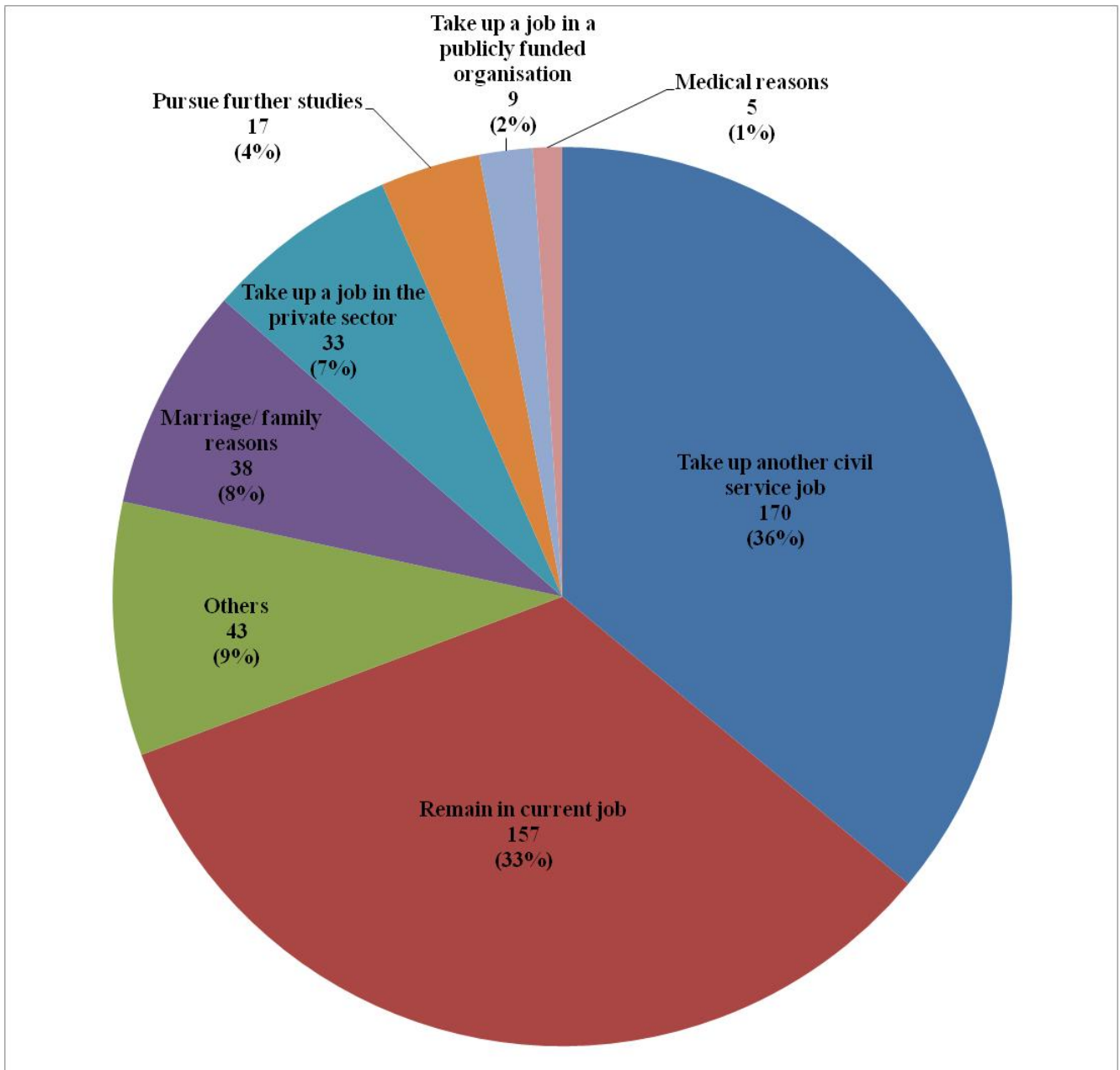
Directorate Civil Servants by Age Groups from 2002-2003 to 2016-2017



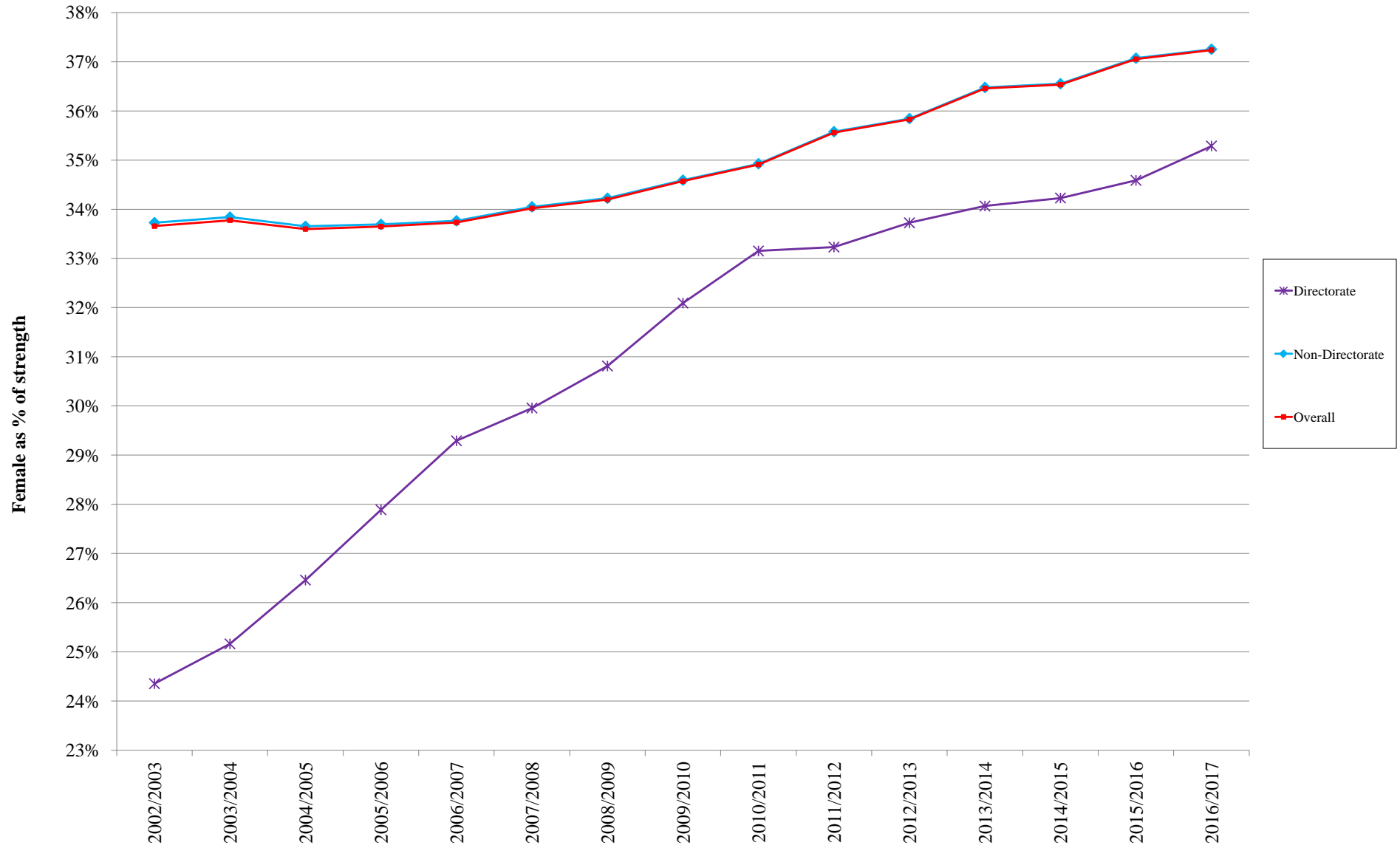
Intake of Civil Servants by Age Groups from 2002-2003 to 2016-2017



Major reasons for declining civil service job offers for 2016-17
(Information from 472 respondents)



Percentage of Female (by Rank) in the Civil Service from 2002-2003 to 2016-2017



**Percentage of Female (by Rank) in the Civil Service (excluding Officers on PPS and GDSPS)
from 2002-2003 to 2016-2017**

